

Forefield Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104872
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324121
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Paul Bamber

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Magda Kidd
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Pugh
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Forefield Lane Crosby Liverpool L23 9SL
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with the acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors, middle leaders, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning and assessments and individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The 66 parental questionnaires returned were also read and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the degree to which the school had closed the gap between boys' and girls' attainment
- how positive pupils are about school, how well they behave and the degree to which they adopt healthy lifestyles and feel safe
- how effective teaching is for the more able in mathematics and for boys
- how successfully leaders and managers are tackling issues to do with boys' performance, outdoor provision in Early Years Foundation Stage and mathematics.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size infant school. Many of the pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds and most are from White British heritage. A much lower than average proportion of pupils comes from a minority ethnic background. Of these, a tiny number speak English as an additional language. A much lower than average percentage of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. No pupil currently has a statement of educational needs and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about a third of the national average figure. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of two Nursery classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and three Reception classes. The pupils have access to a breakfast club and an after-school club. These are not managed by the school and are not within the remit of this inspection and will be reported on separately. A copy of the report will be available on the Ofsted website. The school has the Gold Artsmark Award, NAACE status in recognition of its work in information and communication technology, the Healthy School's Quality mark, the International School's Award and Extended School's Status.

Since January 2009 the school has been led by an acting headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This school continues to provide its pupils with an outstanding education. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. They consistently reach high standards by the end of Year 2 because of excellent teaching and an extremely rich curriculum. Overall, high quality care, very sensitive support and highly effective guidance, ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy school, develop excellent personal skills and behave well. Parents are delighted with the school and extol its provision.

The quality of display in classrooms and around the school is outstanding. It celebrates pupils' best work, stimulates their learning and illustrates the extensive range of pupils' experiences in and out of school. Art continues to be a strength of the school, with superb examples of pupils using their imagination and skills to create paintings, models and sculptures linked to their class work. The very wide range of after-school clubs promotes pupils' social, moral and cultural development extremely well. For example, the eco and gardening clubs make pupils very aware of the ethical issues concerning the environment. Tai Chi sessions help pupils to relax and to understand another culture and sports clubs very successfully promote their physical development and health awareness.

Standards are high in reading, writing and mathematics, both amongst girls and boys. However, although boys' standards are considerably above the average attained by boys nationally, their performance, especially in reading, lags behind that of girls in the school, by a wider margin than found across the country. Although the school has acknowledged this and put into place strategies to try to close this gap, so far there has been little success.

Pupils respond extremely well to very effective teaching by concentrating closely, persevering with challenging tasks and by taking great pride in their work. Teachers and other adults work closely together to match tasks very well to pupils' different needs and to support pupils who find learning more difficult and those who learn more quickly and need pushing on. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, provision is good and children make good progress overall. However, for the younger children in this key stage, activities sometimes lack focus and children do not receive sufficient guidance, especially when they use the outside area. As a result, at times their work and play lacks purpose.

Outstanding leadership ensures continued high standards and the constant drive to improve provision. The even higher quality of the curriculum evident since the last inspection, especially in enhancing pupils' cultural development and in promoting outstanding community cohesion, is testament to leaders' ambition and drive. The

smooth way in which the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have maintained high quality over the last two terms, indicates real strength and depth throughout the management of the school. Senior leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, the school's capacity to improve is good rather than outstanding because despite maintaining and improving on many aspects of its work since the last inspection, the gap between boys' and girls' performance has failed to narrow.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Close the gap between the standards achieved by boys compared with girls by:
 - further embedding the strategies already introduced to enthuse and motivate boys, especially in reading.
- Improve provision for younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - planning more opportunities for children to choose purposeful activities which are carefully linked to specific areas of their learning
 - providing further training for adults other than teachers so that they are better able to support and guide children's learning and development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In classrooms, pupils' confidence in articulating their ideas and thoughts is a clear strength. They thoroughly enjoy role-play and working in pairs or groups. As a result, their social development, particularly the ability to work in teams and to acknowledge the successes and contributions of others, is excellent. Overall, pupils concentrate well, both in whole-class sessions and when they work individually or in groups. At times, boys find maintaining full attention more difficult and need to be reminded of the need to focus more fully.

Children enter school with skills that are at broadly expected levels for their age. They make outstanding academic progress and thoroughly enjoy their learning. This is because teaching is excellent and they have so many positive experiences. Their high quality learning is underpinned by their very positive attitudes, sensible behaviour and evident enthusiasm. Pupils' attendance is above average and they are punctual. Together with the excellent basic language, literacy and numeracy skills they acquire, pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of their education and for life.

Pupils' writing skills are very much better than normally found. Because they are constantly encouraged to talk through situations and stories before they write, they are well prepared before they put pen to paper. As a result, pupils write at length using a wide range of imaginative vocabulary and accurately follow spelling and punctuation rules. Although reading standards are high overall, the greatest gap between the standards that boys attain and those of girls exist in this subject. Other areas in which pupils' skills are particularly high are in art and singing. Pupils' sweet singing in an assembly was a joy to listen to and their wonderful artwork dazzles.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve outstandingly, as do the more-able and the most-able.

The knowledge pupils have of what constitutes a healthy and active lifestyle and of how to stay out of harm's way is excellent. They are adamant that there is no bullying and clear about the importance of personal hygiene. They are very responsible young people, taking on jobs around the school and older pupils guiding younger ones in their work and play.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Key reasons for pupils' high standards are the clarity with which teachers impart basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and the very rich curriculum provided. Teachers' careful teaching of phonics (letter sounds) ensure that pupils, especially girls, quickly learn to read fluently and to write accurately and expressively. Their high expectations result in pupils producing a lot of work at a good pace. Other features of the overall outstanding quality of teaching include: very effective use of questions that challenge pupils of all abilities, good subject knowledge that clarifies ideas and interesting and stimulating activities that capture pupils' interest. Pupils are clear about how well they are doing and what to do next because teachers explain in detail what they should do to improve and set challenging targets for them.

The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection in further refining its already outstanding curriculum. It continues to meet very well the needs and interest of pupils, although its efforts to fully engage boys in reading more have not been entirely successful to date. What is extremely successful is the way in which learning across a range of subjects is linked together to make lessons relevant and lodged within pupils' experiences. The school makes excellent use of visitors and visits to bring learning to life. For example, much recent work in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been based on a visit to a local farm. An assembly observed, illustrated the potent impact of the weekly input by the local church groups on pupils'

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

excellent spiritual development. The wide range of clubs on offer is extremely impressive and enhances pupils' personal, physical, social and cultural development. The very impressive provision for teaching both Spanish and Mandarin enhances pupils' excellent cultural development and their understanding of global issues.

Pupils are cared for sensitively and sensibly. Staff, carers and parents ensure that pupils are safe and that any problems or upsets that occur are quickly resolved. Excellent links with external agencies result in very effective support for those pupils who have specific learning or medical needs. The very well managed arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean that they achieve extremely well and are able to play a full part in a wide range of activities. Pupils' very positive attitudes reflect how much they feel included and the degree to which their successes are celebrated.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and her able supporting team provide very measured and capable leadership. As a result, the school has continued to thrive over the last two terms. Staff are clear about their management responsibilities and of their accountability for maintaining high standards and excellent provision. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and of mutual respect amongst all adults who work in the school. Very accurate self-evaluation means that leaders and managers know clearly what needs further improvement and the actions needed to achieve that. For example, last year a lower than average proportion of pupils in Year 2 attained the higher Level 3, in the teacher assessments in mathematics. Careful analysis of pupils' books and rigorous monitoring of teaching revealed weaknesses in pupils' problem solving skills. Improving these was a focus for school improvement and this year the proportion reaching higher Level 3 was well above average. Equality of opportunity is strongly promoted and apart from the issue about the relative performance of boys and girls, the school successfully achieves it. The school has developed a good understanding of the local community, takes part in many local events and has made very positive links with schools and communities in Spain and in China. Visits from teachers from these countries have outstandingly enhanced pupils and staff experiences and their understanding of other cultures. Leaders' tracking of pupils' progress contributes significantly to pupils' high standards and outstanding achievement. Governance is of excellent quality. Governors are extremely supportive of the school, have been instrumental in providing Nursery education and have stabilised the budget after a period of deficit. They challenge the school when necessary, provide relevant expertise and ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage stems from effective leadership and management, regular and accurate assessment, close links with parents and well focused planning. Staff have a good knowledge of the learning and development needs of their age groups and provide an extremely stimulating environment, particularly indoors. Adults in charge are well focused on ensuring that children make good progress and that their welfare is paramount. Very good planning for pupils' activities is evident in Reception. For example, the outdoor area was laid out as a farmyard with hen houses, scarecrows and straw in which children delighted in playing 'farmers' and searching for eggs. For younger children, outdoor provision is less effective and at times activities lack focus and children are given too little guidance in their play. When this occurs, children's behaviour deteriorates. Close analysis of assessments made of children's progress have led to the successful implementation of strategies which have impacted significantly on children's achievement over the last year. This is especially noticeable in their communication, language and literacy skills and in their personal, social and emotional development. This year most children will leave Reception securely meeting or exceeding the goals set for them in all areas of their learning.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school and the progress their children make. Their responses acknowledge the many strengths of the school but particularly the quality of leadership and management and the way in which the school encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, keep them safe and supports them to make such good progress.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Forefield Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent had more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions for each of their children.

The inspection team received 66 completed questionnaires. In total there are 293 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	6	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

22 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Forefield Infant School, Liverpool, L23 9SL

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for the warm and polite welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You go to an excellent school which helps you learn extremely well and to grow into sensible young people who can take on jobs and are concerned about others.

These are some of the things that are particularly good about your school:

- you do very well especially in writing, in mathematics, art and singing
- the school has very exciting displays which interest you and make you think
- you have excellent teachers and all the adults who work in the school look after you extremely well
- there are lots of very interesting things for you to do in and out of lessons, for example, learning Mandarin and doing Tai Chi
- the adults who run the school do an excellent job.

Even though your school is so very good, things can always improve and so I have asked for two things to happen to make it even better.

- For the boys even though they do better than in most schools, to catch up in their learning with the girls.
- To improve some of the learning for the youngest children, especially in their outdoor area.

Thank you again for making our two days so enjoyable

With my best wishes

Paul Bamber
Lead inspector

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